

Dog: Begging



Why Dogs Beg

Dogs beg because it is a clever strategy for getting tasty scraps, and it works! Like all scavengers, dogs are hardwired to seize any opportunity to get food. If your dog has ever been fed a juicy morsel from the table—or was lucky enough to catch one that simply fell from a plate or your hand—chances are you have a committed beggar on your hands.

Note: Always rule out hunger as a reason for persistent begging. Ask your vet for the correct amount of food for your dog.

How to Deal with Begging

You have two options for dealing with begging:

- A) Use management techniques, i.e. prevention
- B) Use training solutions, i.e. alternative behavior

A. Management techniques. Restrict your dog's access to the kitchen or dining room during mealtimes by using a baby gate. If your dog is crate trained, you can put him in his crate with a stuffed KONG®, chewie, or food puzzle toy. Alternatively, if you want your dog to be in the room with you, use a short leash to tether him to a heavy piece of furniture. Be sure to give him a dog bed or blanket for resting.

To prevent your dog from begging in a public place, use the same techniques in whichever way the environment allows. You can tether your dog close by, but at enough distance to prevent him from pawing at you or jumping up. Or you can bring a chewie for your dog to enjoy while you have your meal.

B. Training solutions. Dogs love food and company, and who can blame them? A dog drooling at your feet or pawing or whining at you, on the other hand, is less enjoyable. The best training option is to teach your dog a so-called incompatible behavior, i.e. something he can do that means he can't beg at the same time. We recommend "Go to bed." To teach your dog to go to his bed or mat on command, see our website and/or handout *Go To Your Bed*.

With that command, you can gradually train your dog to spend all mealtimes quietly waiting on his mat. He gets to be around the family and you get him out from underfoot.

Tips

- Be consistent. If you don't like begging, don't feed your dog scraps when you eat—nor let friends, family, or well-meaning strangers do so either. This is particularly important if you don't want your dog to beg in public (at cafés or other people's houses).
- Never punish or yell at your dog for begging. This kind of negative attention is more than enough reinforcement for your dog to keep begging.
- Prevention is far easier than curing a chronic beggar, so be sure to teach your puppy or newly adopted dog good manners from day one. Make an iron-clad rule never to feed your dog tasty bits at the table.